

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NOUAKC 00360 230938Z
ACTION PER-03

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FOR KARL ACKERMAN-PER/FCA; ALSO FOR GREG KRYZA - AF/EX
FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A (DECONTROL 28 FEB 1979)
TAGS: AMGT, OGEN, APER
SUBJECT: ONWARD ASSIGNMENT FOR THOMA C. AND DORIS A. JAMES

REF: (A) STATE 32855, (B) STATE 37963, (C) NOUAKCHOTT 351

1. YOU WILL RECALL I'M SURE LENGTHY DISCUSSION WE HAD DURING MY SEPTEMBER CONSULTATIONS ABOUT URGENT NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH TO ASSIGNMENT OF FOREIGN SERVICE MAN AND WIFE TEAMS. PRESENT SYSTEM, LIKE TOPSY, APPARENTLY HAS JUST "GROWED" WITH NO OR ILL-DEFINED PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND STATED GUIDELINES, AND WITH SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT DECISIONS BEING BACKED INTO AN AD HOC BASIS REFLECTING MUCH MORE CONSIDERATIONS OF IMMEDIATE STAFFING NEEDS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONVENIENCE THAN CONCERNS ABOUT CAREER DEVELOPMENT, PERSONAL PREFERENCES, AND LONG-RANGE REQUIREMENTS OF OVERSEAS POSTS, PARTICULARLY THE VERY SMALL ONES. I UNDERScoreD IN OUR MEETING THAT RESULT OF PREVIOUS FS ASSIGNMENTS STOP-GAPPING HAD BEEN IN MOST PROVINCES AN EVER LENGTHENING SERIES OF DEPARTMENTAL REQUESTS TO OUR MAN AND WIFE TEAMS TO TAKE ON STILL ANOTHER UNATTRACTIVE POST AND LIVE IN YET ANOTHER HARDSHIP LOCATION. I SUGGESTED THEN THAT A PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WHICH WAS BASED ON EXPLOITATION OF LOYALTY, PROFESSIONALISM, AND SENSE OF DUTY OF DEVOTED AND

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PAGE 02 NOUAKC 00360 230938Z

HARD-WORKING FS PEOPLE WAS, IN BOTH MANAGEMENT AND MORAL TERMS, BANKRUPT. I PROPOSED THE INSTITUTION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE OF A PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WHICH WOULD INSURE ALTERNATION OF PLEASANT AND HARDSHIP POSTS FOR SPECIFIC MAN AND WIFE TEAM AND EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF ASSIGNMENTS TO THE NOUAKCHOTTS AND SALZBURGS OF THE FS ACROSS GEOGRAPHICAL BUREAU LINES AMONG ALL THE MEMBERS OF

FOREIGN SERVICE. IS SPECIFICALLY SUGGESTED DEPARTMENT CONSIDER EXPEDITIOUSLY ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ASSIGNMENT IN AN AFRICAN OR OTHER DIFFICULT AREA AS AN IRON-CLAD PREREQUISITE FOR AN EUROPEAN OR OTHER PLEASANT, TEMPERATE LOCATION ASSIGNMENT.

2. USING TOM AND DORIS JAMES TO ILLUSTRATE BY THESIS, I POINTED TO FACT THAT THIS FS MAN AND WIFE TEAM HAD CHEERFULLY ACCEPTED ASSIGNMENTS TO CAMEROON, CHAD, YEMEN AND MAURITANIA. WHILE THAILAND WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE PLEASANT, IT WAS STILL A DIFFERENTIAL POST, AND SAN SALVADOR WITH ITS NATURAL CATAclysms AND MEDICAL PROBLEMS PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE BEEN, THUS ONLY TUNIS AND BRUSSELS OF ALL THE JAMES' CAREER OF POSTS CAN QUALIFY AS "GOOD POSTS". I SUGGESTED THAT THE JAMES' HAD ALREADY FOR CONVENIENCE OF DEPARTMENT AND FS SERVED AT LEAST THEIR FAIR SHARE OF CAREER TIME IN DIFFICULT PLACES, AND VIGOROUSLY RECOMMENDED DEPARTMENT TAKE STEPS TO INSURE THEY HAD "GOOD POSTS" FOR NEXT COUPLE OF ASSIGNMENTS AT VERY LEAST.

3. MY OBJECTIVE IN RAISING QUESTION OF FUTURE OF MAN AND WIFE TEAMS IN THE FS TOGETHER WITH JAMES' ONWARD ASSIGNMENT WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL (BRIEFLY) AND WITH YOU IN SEPTEMBER WAS TO HEAD OFF VERY THING WHICH HAS NOW OCCURED. PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS MACHINERY HAS SPIT OUT YET ONE MORE HARDSHIP POST FOR THE JAMES,: FROM SAND AND HEAT OF NOUAKCHOTT TO IRON CURTAIN DRABNESS AND REPRESSION OF SOFIA. MOREOVER, IT HAS DONE SO WITH A DEGREE OF ASPERITY (REFTEL) WHICH I FOR ONE FIND VERY UNLIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 NOUAKC 00360 230938Z

BECOMING.

4. I DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE COMPLEXITY AND DIFFICULTY OF MATCHING PEOPLE OF VARYING SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO JOBS ON WORLDWIDE BASIS IN A CONSTANTLY CHANGING INSTITUTION IN A CONTINUALLY SHIFTING ENVIRONMENT. MOREOVER, I RECOGNIZE TIMING AS ONE OF FEW CONSTANTS WHICH IS SUSCEPTIBLE OF BEING "MANAGED". BUT WHEN TIMING BECOMES OVERRIDING OR WORSE, DETERMINATIVE (REF A), OUR PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENT SYSTEM TAKES ON MORE THE CHARACTER OF A PARKING LOT OPERATION THAN A CAREER DEVELOPMENT OR PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

TIMING AS A SYSTEM CRITERION MUST GIVE WAY TO OTHER SYSTEM CRITERIA SUCH AS STAFFER OUTLOOK AND THUS EFFICIENCY AND FAIRNESS. MOREOVER, TIMING CAN BE MANIPULATED TO ACCOMMODATE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OR PREFERENCES AS EVIDENCED BY EXTENSION OF TOURS IN GENEVA, MEXICO CITY, AND GUARANTEE OF THREE-YEAR OCCUPANCY IN

LUXEMBOURG--ALL "GOOD POSTS". IT CAN AND MUST BE MANIPULATED AS WELL TO ACCOMMODATE THE HARDSHIP POST WORKHORSES OF THE FS.

5. I SHOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD TAKE TIME TO LOOK PERSONALLY INTO PROBLEM OF ONWARD ASSIGNMENT FOR TOM AND DORIS JAMES (THEY ARE SUPPOSEDLY BEING PANELED TODAY--FEB 22). PERHAPS WITH HELP OF AF/EX YOU CAN DISCOVER WAY TO UNSTICK APPARENTLY FROZEN VARIABLES OF AVAILABLE JOBS, TIMING, TDY ASSIGNMENTS (IN DEPARTMENT OR ABROAD PENDING OPENING UP OF "GOOD POST"), ETC. AND FREEZE INSTEAD CRITERION OF A "GOOD POST AFTER A BAD POST". THIS AS FIRST STEP IN RE-EXAMINATION OF WHOLE MAN AND WIFE TEAM PROBLEM.

HANDYSIDE

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